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WILLIAM
McKINLEY

Late President of the
United States

**Memorial
Address**

By JOHN SHRADY, M.D.
SURGEON ALEXANDER HAM-
ILTON POST, 182 G. A. R.



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READ BEFORE

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SEPTEMBER 19, 1901

BY JOHN SHRADY, M.D.

POST SURGEON.

COMRADES :

In an address entitled "Medical New York in 1800," delivered by myself before a medical association in 1889—pardon my vanity, for it was commemorative somewhat of the time of my own parents—I took occasion to say in part: "The present century dawned upon this city when the nation was in gloom. Washington, not many days before, had rounded out his symmetrical career with a death which touched the popular heart. John Adams was in the presidential chair; society was in its formative stage; partisanship was bitter; and the memory of a great struggle was still green. Immigration

had not yet begun with its sweeping tide ; the English and Dutch stock, in spite of frequent intermarriages, had not yet become thoroughly amalgamated. The epithet 'Tory' with many was the word of greatest reproach ; 'Hessian' was a grade lower in the vocabulary, while the Revolutionary patriots, some of whom were in the sere and yellow leaf, were growing to be the idols of the day. The populace had hardly yet lost its awe of rank, which was now obliged to be content with wearing the more humble mask of respectability. Yet men consented to be led, and accepted conclusions if they only had the glamour of a great name. They had gained liberty, it is true, but it seemed a legacy as unwieldy as it was unexpected. The Irish revolutionary struggle of 1798 brought many additions to the shores, and the Palatines, the first of the German immigrants, with memories of Marshal Turenne and their smoking villages, were beginning to pass into the second generation. The hardy Swiss also brought their thrift, their patience and their sagacity. There was also a leaning affection toward the French, and a copying of their Jacobin clubs, which began in a moment that ended in making Jefferson the third president of the sixteen state confederation. The knee breeches, cocked hats and silver buckles had begun to

give way to the red waistcoat and French pantaloon, and the very children began to omit, not unwillingly, their ceremonious courtesies to strangers. Anarchy had virtually come; but it came to a safe race, with a Saxon strain and a Saxon sense of justice.

There was a trembling, but no upheaval. All felt that it was the world's last grand experiment of personal liberty; that man was to be trusted only once more. The overtopping spirit of party, which forbade friendship, and which as ever resorted to slander, culminated at length with the disgrace of Burr and the death of Hamilton on the field of honor. There was a shudder, a pause, and then the flame shot up again. To repeat, this was an age of controversy, of fierce politics and of unyielding dogmatism, in which the leaders were intolerant, arrogant and aggressive."

All this, subject to certain parallelisms of the present, may carry many subjects for reflection. But since 1800, the year which gave title to the paper in the transactions, how fierce has been the velocity of the panorama! The great republic has grown from a population of 3,000,000 to nearly 80,000,000, with a dominant language spoken somewhere in every community of the world. It moves onward by its interdependence like a London crowd;

it has its power of construction, but it has also its loss by friction ; it has its virtues and its vices, its ambitions and its foils ; it elevates and it also grinds exceeding fine. But why pursue our metaphors, knowing, as we do, if we delve deeply enough that we shall find the hideous fossils of the past, for no race or clime is without them. It is within the memory of us all that the vain-glory of exemption possessing our fair land, won by "the survival of the fittest," has yet to learn much from the struggles of the past.

Where, now, is our boast, with "the deep damnation of the taking off" of three presidents? Need I name these? Lincoln, whose portraits even yet look out upon us through glistening eyes of tenderness—Garfield, the victim of a salary-hunter, that kept on to the very last, ever muttering incomprehensible epigrams. But even while these murderers, whose names were fast passing into a hazy oblivion, with a trail wiping out deluded followers and weeping kindred, there appears an Iscariot with a well-rehearsed *technique* and inflexible purpose, who came not with a kiss and a "Hail, Master," but with the proffered hand and the swift bullet. May we not truly say that a serpent stole into a paradise, as a cringing sin, an incarnation of a hideous dream, a fair-haired

miscreant with a dramatic smile beckoning to a doom. Who was the victim? Was he a tyrant whose doctrine was that "the king can do no wrong"—a Napoleon, who bade his cavalry "charge for glory," over two regiments of his invincible infantry; was he one who cumbered the earth, whimpering for a bed, which he never had the frugality to enjoy; was he even one who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage or regarded his responsibilities as merely a peacock's plume?

Was *he* loyal to some canny oath which bound him to unjust deeds under vague penalties? As casuist or hypocrite did he ever "counsel evil that good might come?" Did he ever "serve the devil in the livery of heaven?" Cold-hearted, and with the zest of a traitor, was he a plotter in secret, dazzling the people with damaging theories of inequalities? Blatant in speech, did he promise loot to his army, empty honor to his navy, forgiveness of the taxes of his people or luxury to the idle? Let his career answer.

Who, then, was he that had so merited a pitiful fate and for whom princes and potentates, peoples and nations, in this waning day, are rendering such simultaneous homage? Some one has said that posterity takes up not many echoes, for "Jordan rolls between," and its shores are

smoothed by many feet. Will this be true of our McKinley, whose mere name is sufficient rank?

Know ye not that Moses after many wanderings was accorded a sight of the promised land? Know ye not that our president both revered God and loved his fellow men?

Simon, just and devout, to whom it had been revealed that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, was accorded that blest opportunity and exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." That Saviour upon the ignominious cross also saw the glories of heaven, and even uninspired Shakespeare softly tells Banquo that *he* "would not be king but should beget them."

My Comrades! *Can* we sum up the virtues of one who so adorned all the walks of life? Need we be reminded that virtues are not aggressive, certainly not spectacular, even though some say that they are mere duties, wreaking vengeance in pathos, redressing wrongs with sobs and defeats in dirges? They certainly apologize as did their great exemplar: "Father, forgive, for they know not."

Yet can we say that the life of our late president could have been altogether unhappy? He believed in a divine ruler, in the republic and in its people. He never reasoned in the abstract; perhaps he may have been a coward to his conscience, though in the best sense unensnared, and therefore free of will; and perhaps, too, the clear, brisk winds ~~howling~~ around the mountain homes of his ancestors, had made him oblivious of hardship and had given him a foretaste of the old chair near the glowing back log and the Bible upon his mother's knees. Perhaps he had found a New England expanded into an Ohio, with a time-honored frugality evolved into a sumptuous hospitality, its spartan virtues developed into a covenanter's tenacity, and, best of all, a howling wilderness grown into prayerful homes unmenaced by lurking foes.

Now he himself is among the immortals, leaving the world nobly, grandly and with "malice toward none," and with no Macbeth to "murder sleep." Ever after "Lead Kindly Light" and "Nearer, my God, to Thee" will be sung with more subdued fervor and a more quivering tremor. Mothers throughout the ages will tell the story of the pure life and the tragedy that convulsed the world all for the sake of the rank fungus expanded into a venom in sunny fields; a life bereft by the whim of a wretch

claimed by no one soil, without a country, and now protected by the very law which he despised. Can we prophesy that to the assassin, with his final hope in suicide, there can come either the crown of martyrdom or the crown of glory, or *what—Ob, what!* But, comrades, what now remains to us but to “watch and pray,” for there are warnings of the whirlwind, the lightning and the storm. Let us then keep snug our hatches of the Ship of State, for to us this is God’s writing in the skies.



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